

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

**Re:   *Expanding Access to Mobile Wireless Services Onboard Aircraft*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WT Docket No. 13-301.**

Proposing rule changes, so consumers can benefit from advances in communications technology, is one of the Commission's core responsibilities. Currently, the FCC prohibits certain cellular communications services on aircraft to guard against the threat of harmful interference to terrestrial wireless networks. However, over the past several years, we have seen the development of Airborne Access Systems that use picocells and a network control unit to minimize potential interference. This technology has now advanced to the point where providers can offer mobile services on planes while protecting aviation safety.

The item before us, today, stands to promote competition for mobile broadband services on planes and creates an environment in which interested air travelers will no longer be left with one option for data service currently allowed by any particular airline. Allowing other wireless companies to compete with available inflight Wi-Fi services could lead to lower prices and better quality data options for fliers. Initiating a rule making, today I believe, is the best way to create an appropriate forum for the wireless industry to provide thoughtful comment so that our staff can carefully examine the engineering and licensing issues necessary to deploy competitive options.

As we know all too well, the announcement of this NPRM was met with some strong reaction based on the belief that these proposals from the FCC would automatically lead to a rash of annoying telephone conversations on planes during flight. As the item explains, however, our proposed rules would not require commercial airlines to permit voice calls. In fact, the Airborne Access Systems give commercial airlines the capacity to prevent voice calls and provide data services only. So I am confident that commercial airlines will continue to monitor the debate and determine if they should simply continue to limit their passengers' use of this technology to only "quiet" or data services.

Now I admit, upfront, that when traveling by rail I strive to be among the first in line for the quiet car. However, it is my opinion, that this robust debate about mobile phone call etiquette in-flight should not stop the FCC from removing unnecessary and outdated technical rules that could provide consumers with safe, competitive options for mobile broadband service while traveling by air. If enough members of the consuming public oppose voice calls, during flight, I expect the airlines will hear that opposition and govern themselves accordingly.

I thank John Leibovitz and his team for their presentation and I welcome Roger Sherman as the new Chief of the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau.